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SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

AF/S FOR BRIAN WALCH
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: SURVIVING IN TODAY,S ZDF -- VIEWS OF TWO SERVING
OFFICERS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES A. RAY FOR REASONS 1.4 B,D

SUMMARY

11. (C) The most senior ranks of the Zimbabwean military are so entwined with ZANU-PF as to be practically indistinguishable from the party. This is particularly frustrating for many officers who want to concentrate on building a professional military that can serve as a national army and play a role in regional stability.

12. (C/NF) The following views are from two general officers currently serving, who spoke privately with Ambassador and DATT on January 5 and 6; Brigadier General Herbert Chingono (strictly protect), Inspector General for the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), and Major General Fidelis Satuku (strictly protect), Director General for Policy and Personnel, Zimbabwe Defense Forces (ZDF). END SUMMARY.

FACTIONS AND SANCTIONS

13. (C) There are no "factions" within the military, as this implies leadership around which factions can coalesce. There are different attitudes and opinions: full support of ZANU-PF, recognition that the military has been politicized and improperly used, and the fence sitters who are waiting to see who comes out on top. Except for those who are fully in bed with ZANU-PF, people keep their views private to avoid being accused of treason, which can have fatal consequences.

14. (C) The Commander of the Defense Forces, General Constantine Chiwenga, is a political general who works hard, but who has very little practical military experience or expertise. A political commissar before 1980, he has only attended one mid-level training course, which he did not complete. If given a choice between a military and a political issue, he routinely defaults to the political. His

goal is to be in politics when his tenure ends as defense chief, and he will be very disappointed if he fails to achieve that goal. He has been given to making political statements. This has caused some ZANU-PF politicians to be suspicious of him, and he was chastised by Mugabe for being too "political."

15. (C) Military officers at the one- and two-star level have felt the impact of sanctions, and would like to see them lifted, although they understand the reason they exist. Those who are currently undecided could be convinced to move into the reform camp if they saw any signs of flexibility in the sanctions regime. Military personnel valued their former relationship with the U.S. and would like to see it resumed. Many acknowledge that the military's role in the violence of 2008 and previously was a misuse of the military and hope such never happens again. The key, they believe, is continued economic stability and a better resource flow for the military.

16. (C) Those military personnel who are older with more experience tend to view difficulties in life more realistically than the younger generation. Life teaches us realistically than the younger generation. Life teaches us to expect a certain amount of difficulty and conflict. The situation in Zimbabwe with the current coalition government is no different. To think that there would be little or no conflict in such a government is naive. That said, both sides in the current lash-up must work out their differences; they owe it to the people who elected them. In this regard, the media is often unhelpful. Reports that emphasize extreme points of view should be read with suspicion and skepticism. Relations within government are hardly ever smooth, and conversely, reports that predict the demise of one side or

another are often meant only to enflame, not inform. For example, we have experienced a situation when two opposing politicians go into a private meeting and interact civilly, getting along relatively well. Then, at the end of the meeting, as soon as a microphone is put in front of them, all hell breaks loose.

A VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

17. (C) Ambassador and DATT met privately on January 5 with Brigadier General Herbert Chingono, Inspector General for the ZNA, and on January 6 with Major General Fidelis Satuku, Director General for Policy and Personnel, ZDF. These two serving military officers took a grave personal risk meeting with us, and their identities should be strictly protected. In the current environment, they risk being charged with treason for an unsanctioned meeting with U.S. officials, and that could have fatal consequences. Chingono, an artillery officer, was the last ZNA officer to train under the IMET program, graduating from NDU in 1999, while Satuku received training in England. Both participated in the fight for independence as teenagers and received commissions for that participation. Unlike some of the senior military who came out of the struggle, however, they sought to develop professional military credentials.

18. (C) Chingono said that the most senior ranks of the ZDF are so entwined with the ZANU-PF party as to be practically indistinguishable. This is particularly frustrating for those officers who would like to focus on developing a professional military force that can be an effective national army, and can at the same time play a constructive role in the southern African region. This situation has been exacerbated since the ZDF came under the leadership of General Constantine Chiwenga, a man with little practical military experience (he was a political commissar before 1980), who has clear political ambitions. Chingono said that once Chiwenga called a meeting of senior officers that started at 10:00 in the morning and went on until 9:30 pm, which discussed economics and politics, but not once did a military issue come up. He said that near the end of the

meeting, as he consulted his notes, he turned to a colleague next to him and asked, "Why have we not discussed how to teach soldiers to shoot straight, how to better feed and clothe them?" This was, he said, a purely rhetorical question, as, given a choice between a military and a political issue, Chiwenga will always chose the political because he doesn't know enough about the military to be comfortable discussing it. Satuku, who works directly for Chiwenga at the Defense Ministry, said that he is hardworking, coming to his office at 7:30 am and staying until 10:00 at night, but he spends his time on political issues.

A GENERAL WHO WANTS TO BE A POLITICIAN

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19. (C) Both officers stressed Chiwenga's political ambitions repeatedly. Chingono said, "He will be very disappointed if he does not get a political position when his tenure as defense chief ends." His politics, however, could very well be his undoing. His frequent political statements have upset and worried some ZANU-PF politicians, and about five months ago Mugabe reportedly called him and chastised him for it. (COMMENT: This comes as no big surprise. People who do not hesitate to use the military to enforce and buttress their hold on power have to be concerned that a member of that very same military might one day use it against them. What is surprising is that Mugabe himself took a hand in the matter. This seems to counter rumors we've heard that he is under the control of the military. END COMMENT.)

NO MILITARY FACTIONS, JUST DIFFERENT VIEWS

10. (C) In response to a question about factions within the military, Chingono said that he would take issue with the view because factions implies that there is leadership around which they can coalesce. What there are, he said, are different attitudes and opinions. There are those who fully support ZANU-PF, have no compunction about engaging in violence when the party orders it, and who are intensely political. Others recognize that the military has been used improperly, and in some instances, illegally, and would like to get back to the business of developing a professional military. They worry about morale, discipline, and training of the troops. Still others are fence sitters -- they could be professional military or thugs -- waiting to see who comes out on top, and will cast their lot with the winning side just to survive. With the exception of those who are loyal ZANU-PF tools, no one dares publicly air their views. The consequences of such rashness could be fatal. (COMMENT: The Pomona Barracks weapons theft, when several soldiers, including at least one officer who fought in the liberation war, were tortured and several died, demonstrates how the hardliners treat those on the "out." END COMMENT.) Chingono said that on the issue of sanctions, the key people on the list probably don't really care, as they have other avenues of funding. Hurt by them, though, are other officers who are not on the list. He spoke of one brigadier general who was in Kenya for training who was unable to get his salary remitted through the banking system because of sanctions. While they would like to see them lifted, they are realistic enough to know this won't happen in the short term. The fence sitters, however, could be swayed by some flexibility in sanctions relating to state-owned enterprises, as this would show that there is hope.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

11. (C) Regarding predictions on the future of Zimbabwe, both officers expressed cautious optimism. Military personnel who are older and more experienced take a pragmatic

view of difficulties compared to the younger generation. Life, they said, teaches us to expect a certain amount of difficulty and conflict, and the situation with the current coalition government is no different. Anyone who thinks there would be little or no conflict in such an arrangement is very naive. Having said that, it is essential that both sides in the coalition government work out their differences because they owe it to the people who elected them. The people of Zimbabwe want to be able to live their lives in peace; they want a house, a car, and education for their children. Many, perhaps even most, in the military want to be able to pursue their profession in an honorable manner. Qbe able to pursue their profession in an honorable manner. When the government, or the press, report that everything is rosy, they said, it is time to be suspicious, because it means they are concealing something. The events of 2008 when the military was used to violate the human rights of those who opposed ZANU-PF are, Chingono said, hopefully an anomaly that will never happen again. When asked why officers who want to be professional didn't oppose such employment, he said, "In a professional military, you can be court-martialed for failing to carry out an order." (COMMENT: This raises questions of culpability for following an illegal order, similar to the arguments advanced at the Nuremberg Tribunal after WWII, but one can also see the motivation for this, given the potentially fatal consequences here in Zimbabwe. END COMMENT.)

¶12. (C) Chingono said that if the West insists on prosecution of all personnel involved in the 2008 violence

and the killings in Matabeleland, this is likely to ensure that those in power will do everything to retain that power. The Ambassador pointed out that these are issues that the people of Zimbabwe have to decide, but that there should at least be some forum established to allow healing. Regarding any military involvement in violent land seizures, however, this is a politically-motivated criminal act, perpetrators can be identified, and the legal system should take appropriate action.

¶13. (C) Both Chingono and Satuku said they would like to see re-engagement with the U.S. military because they and many of their colleagues are impressed with the flexibility and resilience of American military personnel. They also think that the generation of military officers that will follow them could benefit from exposure to American military professionalism. When asked about ethnic conflict in the military, the treatment of non-liberation officers, and morale, their response was that: (a) when people face hardships together, external differences tend to be minimized; (b) there is at the junior- and mid-levels no difference in treatment, and most units below battalion are commanded by officers who entered the military after 1980; and (c) while morale now is acceptable, if they're unable to keep the military productively occupied, there are likely to be problems in the future. Satuku said that, if there were no discipline problems with young soldiers (provided they don't interfere with mission accomplishment) he would be worried, because it is not possible to have a grouping of young men in such an environment and not have at least a few problems. Professional officers, though, can deal with these issues. The key to keeping the military in good order, both officers said, is continued economic stability and growth which will allow the military to have an adequate flow of resources.

¶14. (C) COMMENT: These views are from only two people, and can't be extrapolated to represent a general consensus of the military. But, they are instructive, and tend to validate other information we hear about what goes on inside the ZDF. END COMMENT.

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